

PERFECT

William Anastasi A Retrospective

Collaboration Galleri Specta

26.3 to 24.4 1999

Stalke Galleri and Specta Galleri together had the pleasure of presenting a retrospective exhibition of prints by the American artist William Anastasi.

The two-gallery exhibition presented virtually all of the graphic works produced by Anastasi over the previous two decades. In Copenhagen, editions had been produced in cooperation with Niels Borch Jensen, Edition Copenhagen, and Stalke Galleri during the 1980s and 1990s. The exhibition also included a new suite of prints that was executed during the exhibition period in collaboration with Niels Borch Jensen.

Anastasi's 1998 editions, made with Niels Borch Jensen and Stalke Galleri, were the subject of Thomas McEvilley's article "William Anastasi: A Retrospective in Prints," published in the November/December issue of *Art on Paper*.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others, had reserved works from the 1998 production. It was also announced that the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York would acquire *Free Will* (1968) and *Terminus* (1978) for its permanent collection. The former was a video work, while the latter was a two-part, in-situ photographic installation.

In the mid-1960s, Virginia Dwan opened a gallery in New York, where Anastasi presented four important solo exhibitions between 1965 and 1970. At that early moment, the Dwan Gallery became one of the most significant venues for Minimal Art, Earth Art, and Conceptual Art.

Anastasi's work was, at the time, also included in the exhibition *Drawing Is Another Kind of Language: Recent American Drawings from a New York Private Collection*, which was shown at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

A selection of Anastasi's works from the 1960s and 1970s was subsequently included in the major traveling exhibition *Afterimage: Drawing Through Process*, which opened on April 11 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Over the preceding twelve years, Stalke Galleri had presented four solo exhibitions by William Anastasi. He was also one of the artists included in the group exhibition *Concept Art* in 1988. Other participating artists included Marcel Broodthaers, Vincenzo Agnetti, On Kawara, Lawrence Weiner, Les Levine, Yutaka Matsuzawa, and Joseph Kosuth.

At the opening reception at Specta Galleri, William Anastasi executed *Incision* directly on a gallery wall. This work was originally conceived in 1966.

Stalke Galleri and Galleri Specta presented approximately sixty graphic works by William Anastasi. The exhibitions were on view through April 24, 1999.



William Anastasi's 1998 print *Perfect*, a split bite aquatint

William Anastasi – Perfect
Stalke Galleri and Galleri Specta, 1999

In the spring of 1999, Stalke Galleri, in collaboration with Galleri Specta, presented the exhibition *Perfect* by the American conceptual artist William Anastasi. The exhibition functioned as a retrospective presentation of Anastasi's graphic and conceptual practice and highlighted his central role in the development of American Conceptual Art since the 1960s.

From the beginning of his career, Anastasi worked with language, action, and material as carriers of ideas rather than as aesthetic ends in themselves. In *Perfect*, this approach became evident through works in which words, sentences, and simple graphic structures confronted the viewer's expectations of form, intention, and authorship. Several works revolved around repetition, variation, and displacement—both visually and conceptually—pointing to the tension between perfection and imperfection.

Contemporary critical reception emphasized how Anastasi's works balanced rigorous conceptual strategies with a personal and historically charged dimension. In a Danish context, the exhibition was understood as a significant encounter with an artist who consistently insisted on the primacy of the idea, while at the same time engaging with the ethical and cultural implications embedded in language. Historically and politically loaded terms were introduced as deliberate disruptions, challenging both the institution of art and the position of the viewer.

Art critic Jacob Lillemose described Anastasi's practice as one that resisted consensus and fixed interpretation. The works were perceived as open situations in which meaning continuously shifted between artist, artwork, and audience. Lillemose further pointed to Anastasi's ability to maintain a radical simplicity that rendered the works immediately accessible while remaining conceptually demanding.

The exhibition was also framed within a broader art-historical perspective, positioning Anastasi as a key figure among the early American conceptual artists, alongside figures such as Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Kosuth, and On Kawara. The presentation of *Perfect* in Copenhagen was widely understood as a result of Anastasi's long-standing collaboration with Danish master printer Niels Borch Jensen and his close relationship with Stalke Galleri.

Overall, *Perfect* was received as a concentrated and important presentation of William Anastasi's artistic practice. The exhibition reaffirmed Stalke Galleri's role as a platform for international Conceptual Art in Denmark and marked another significant chapter in the gallery's sustained engagement with historically grounded yet continuously relevant artistic positions.



Exhibition views from William Anastasi's 1999 show at Stalke Galleri featuring the video work Subway Drawing and copper print series Burst.